



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES OFFERS WINTER WEATHER WARNINGS FOR PET OWNERS

WASHINGTON-As cold weather descends across the nation, The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) cautions pet owners of winter dangers that can threaten their pets.

"Caring for pets in the winter requires a few common sense precautions to make sure they are safe and comfortable," says Stephanie Shain, director of outreach for companion animals at The HSUS. "The basic rule of thumb is if it's too cold for you, it's too cold for your pet."

The HSUS offers the following tips to keep your pets in top shape through the winter months:

- **Don't leave pets outdoors when the temperature drops below freezing.** Dogs need outdoor exercise but take care not to keep them out for lengthy periods during very cold weather. Short-coated dogs may feel more comfortable wearing a sweater during walks. Dogs and cats are safer indoors in all sorts of weather. Animals should never be left outdoors unattended as they risk being stolen or otherwise being harmed.
- **Wind-chill can threaten a pet's life, no matter what the temperature.** Outdoor dogs must be protected by a dry, draft-free doghouse that is large enough to allow the dog to sit and lie down comfortably, but small enough to hold in his/her body heat. The floor should be raised a few inches off the ground and covered with cedar shavings or straw. The house should be turned to face away from the wind, and the doorway should be covered with a flap of heavy waterproof fabric or heavy plastic.
- **Pets spending a lot of time outdoors need more food in the winter.** Keeping warm depletes energy. Routinely check your pet's water dish to make certain the water is fresh and not frozen. Use plastic food and water bowls rather than metal; when the temperature is low, your pet's tongue can stick and freeze to metal.
- **Warm car engines are dangerous for cats and small wildlife.** Parked cars attract small animals who may crawl up under the hood looking for warmth. To avoid injuring any hidden animals, bang on your car's hood to scare them away before starting your engine.
- **De-icing chemicals are hazardous.** The salt and other chemicals used to melt snow and ice can irritate the pads of your pet's feet. Wipe the feet with a damp towel every time after coming in from outdoors - even if you don't see salt on walkways.
- **Antifreeze is a deadly poison.** However, it has a sweet taste that attracts animals. Wipe up spills and store antifreeze out of reach. Better yet, use antifreeze-coolant made with propylene glycol; if swallowed in small amounts, it will not hurt pets, wildlife, or people.

-30-

The HSUS is the nation's largest animal protection organization with over seven million members and constituents. The HSUS is a mainstream voice for animals, with active programs in companion animals, wildlife, animals in research and farm animals and sustainable agriculture. For nearly 50 years, The HSUS has protected all animals through legislation, litigation, investigation, education, advocacy and field work. The non-profit organization is based in Washington, DC and has 10 regional offices across the country. For more information, visit The HSUS' Web site - www.hsus.org.